

Remarks

Claims 1-19 are pending in the present application. Claims 2-5 have been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1 and 6-19 are currently under consideration and stand rejected.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the opportunity to discuss the current rejections in a telephonic interview on May 15, 2003. The meaning of the term "filling" was discussed, with the Examiner indicating that he felt deposition of any amount of a material in a trench constituted "filling" the trench.

Claim 1 has been amended in view of the discussion with the Examiner to clarify that in the claimed process the trench is completely filled. The amendment is fully supported by the specification as filed, for example at page 17, lines 26-28 and in Figures 6 - 8.

Applicants would also like to point out that at the time of the present invention one of skill in the art would not have been motivated to choose an atomic layer deposition process to completely fill a trench. Until the present invention, there was no recognition in the art that problems with the prior art processes, such as those pointed out in the specification at pages 2-3. Without this recognition, the skilled artisan would not have selected ALD from among the possible methods for filling a trench, particularly given the increased time and expense traditionally associated with ALD processes.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

The rejection of Claims 1 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Sherman (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0031618) has been maintained. The Examiner refers, for example, to paragraph [39] of Sherman for teaching that trenches can be filled using the methods he discloses.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite "completely filling" trenches. Sherman does not teach or suggest completely filling a trench by his methods. Thus, Applicants request withdrawal of the present rejection.

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Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 7-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over the combination of Sherman in view of Gates (U.S. Patent No. 6,203,613).

In view of the patentability of Claim 6, from which Claims 7 to 19 depend, Applicants submit that this rejection should be withdrawn as well.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that the application is in condition for allowance and respectfully requests the same. If, however, some issue remains that the Examiner feels can be addressed by Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is cordially invited to call the undersigned for authorization.

Respectfully submitted,

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